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REMINISCENCES OF A LONG LIFE*

BY

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THE BREAKING OUT OF THE WAR

ILLUSTRATED WITH PORTRAITS AND VIEWS

THE campaign committees kept me very hard at work during the fall of 1860 until the day of the election. I was too tired to take any part in the Republican jubilations after Abraham Lincoln's victory. But my rest at my quiet Wisconsin home was soon cut short by my necessities. I found myself compelled, a week or two after the election, to set out on lecturing tours for the purpose of replenishing somewhat my drained exchequer.

The news of the success of the Republican party had hardly gone abroad in the land, when political demonstrations took place in some of the Southern states, which made it apparent that the threats of secession, to which of late years we had become accustomed, were after all something more than mere bluster and gasconade. The danger of a disunion movement, with consequences difficult to foresee, loomed up in portentous reality. A chill swept over the North. The anti-slavery enthusiasm of the campaign was suddenly hushed.

Buchanan, the "Northern Man with Southern Principles"

President Buchanan's message at the opening of the session of Congress was highly characteristic. He argued, in substance, that while no state had a constitutional right to secede from the Union, yet, if a state did so, there was nowhere any power to keep it in the Union. President Buchanan was the very personification of the political species then known as the "Northern man with Southern principles,"— that is, a Northern politician always ready to do the bidding of the slave-holding interest. I had been introduced to Mr. Buchanan at a White House reception and had taken a good look at him while, after the hand-shaking, he conversed with several senators.

He was a portly old gentleman with a white head, always slightly inclined to one side, and a cunning twinkle in his eye which seemed to say that although he might occasionally not appear to be of your opinion, yet there was a secret understanding between him and you, and that you might trust him for it. He always wore a white neckerchief like a divine. His moral weakness was of the wise-looking kind. He could pronounce the commonplace sophistries of the pro-slavery Democracy with all the impressiveness of unctuous ponderosity. He had rendered the slave-power abject service in the Kansas affair, again and again putting forth statements of facts, which he could not possibly believe to be true, and constitutional doctrines that could be

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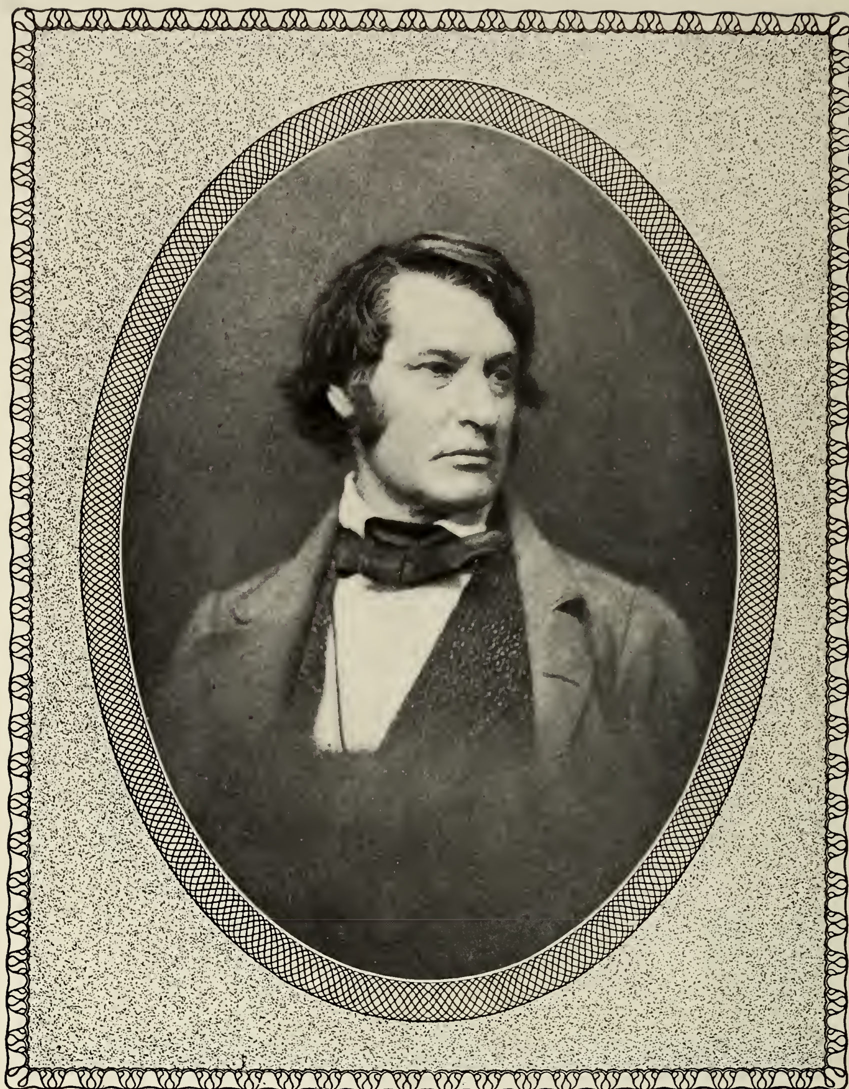
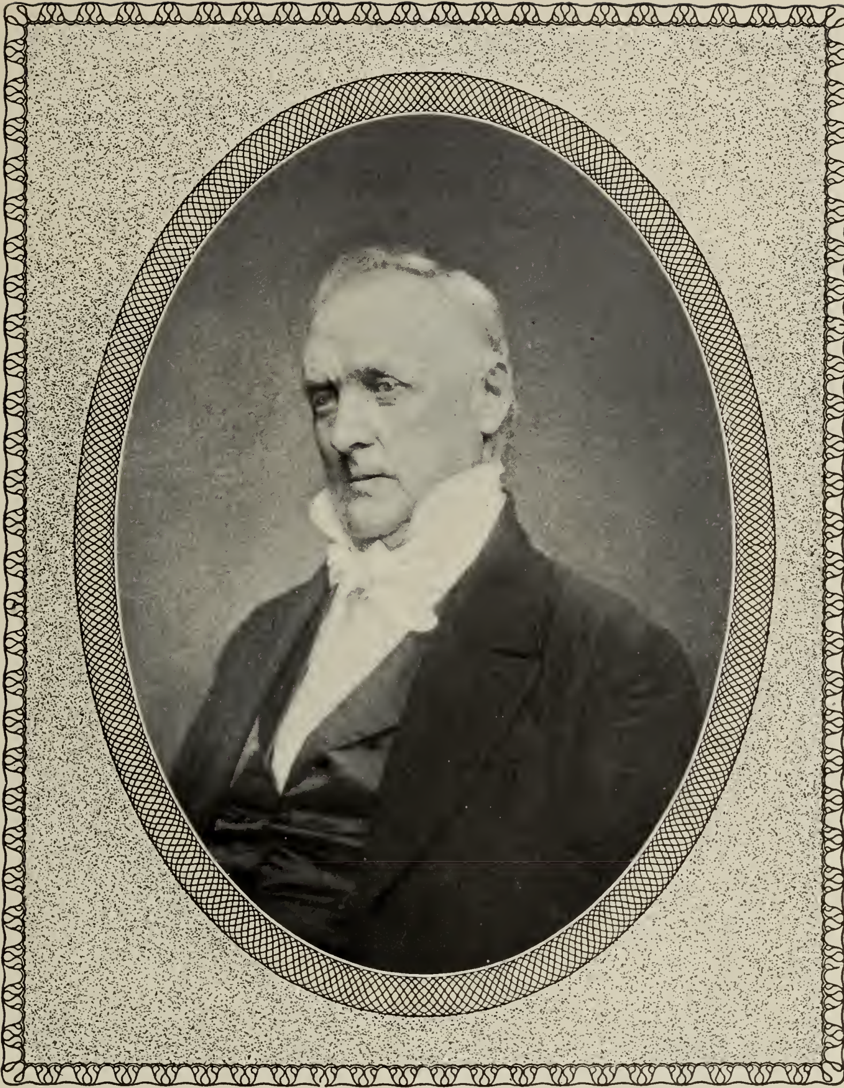


CHARLES SUMNER

From a photograph made about 1860 and reproduced here through the courtesy of the owner, Mr. F. J. Garrison

supported only by the most audacious shifts of logic. He was mindful of the fact that he owed the presidency to the trust of the slave-power in his fidelity to its behests. So far he had justified that trust to the full of his ability and of his opportunities. No Southern pro-slavery fanatic could have served the slave-holding interest with more zeal and — considering his position as a Northern man — with more self-denial. By forfeiting the good opinion of his neighbors, he had really made himself a martyr to the cause of slavery. But when his Southern masters now went so far as to strike out for the dissolution of the Union, the destruction of the Republic itself, his situation became truly desperate. Thus he satisfied neither side, but won the contempt of both.

In his Cabinet he had three secretaries — of the Treasury, of War, and of the Interior,— of whom he should have known that they conspired with the Secessionists. He permitted them to remain at the heads of their



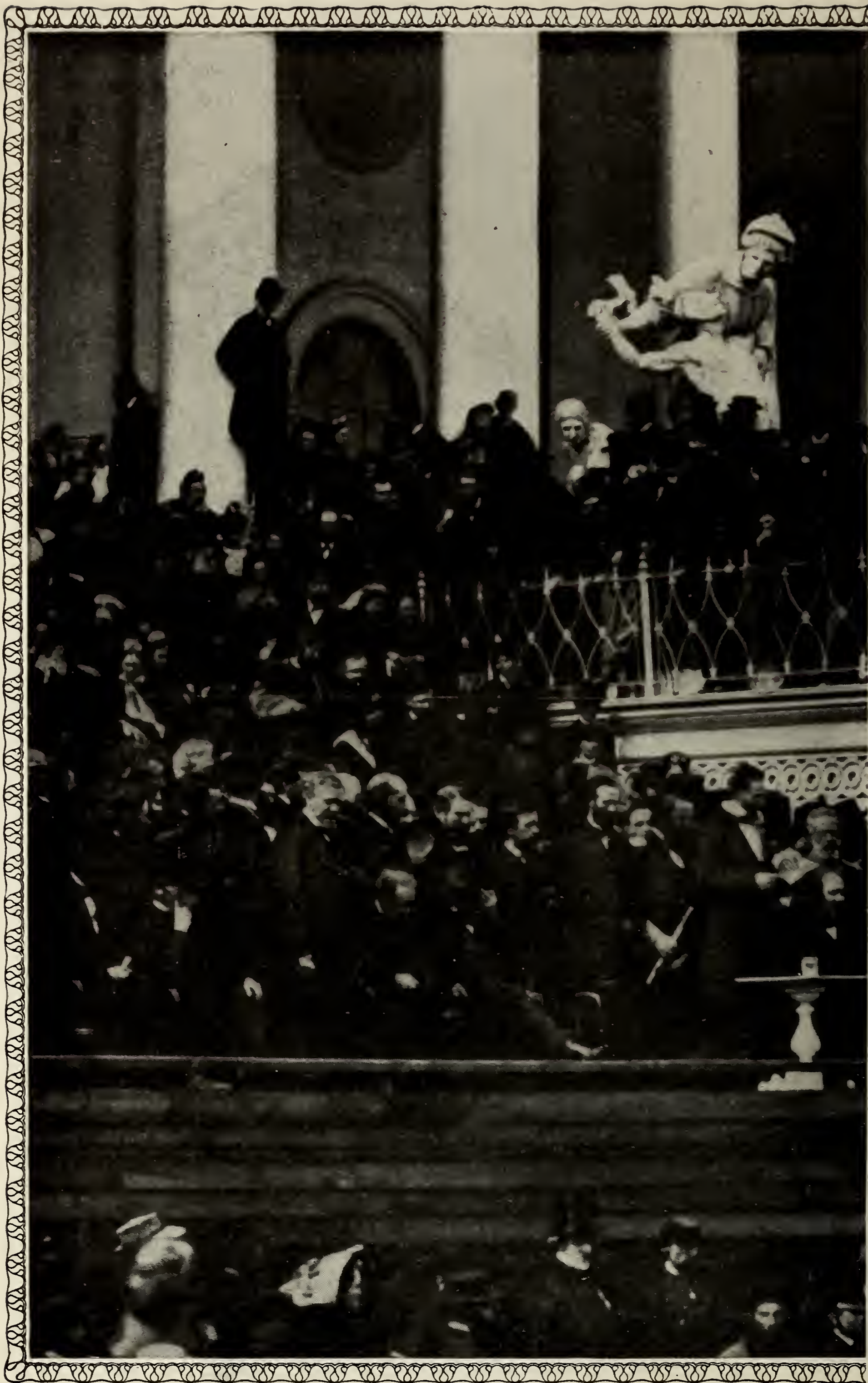
JAMES BUCHANAN

The fifteenth president of the United States
From a war-time photograph

departments until they thought they had exhausted all the resources for mischief which their official power gave them. What he really did accomplish was to encourage the promoters of the secession movement by his confession of constitutional impotency, and to give them ample time for undisturbed preparation while the National Government stood idly by. He recoiled from active treason, but had not courage enough for active patriotism. Thus Mr. Buchanan, to whom fortune offered one of the finest chances to win a great name simply by doing his plain duty with resolution and energy, managed to make himself the most miserable presidential figure in American history.

The Compromise Epidemic and Seward's Change of Attitude

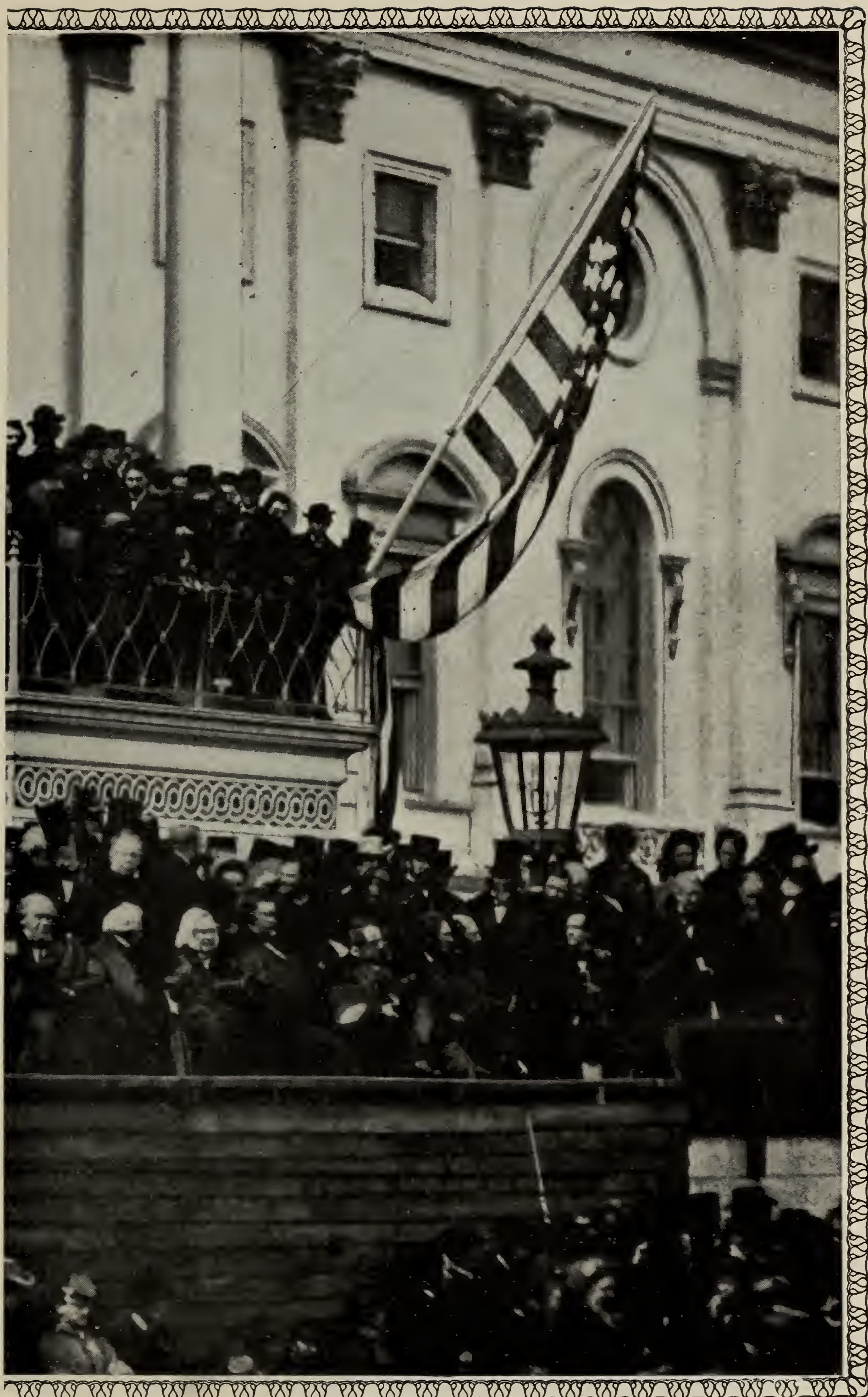
The compromise epidemic in the country naturally infected Congress, and both Houses at once, after the opening of the session, appointed committees to devise some way of "conciliation and peace." Although the



LINCOLN

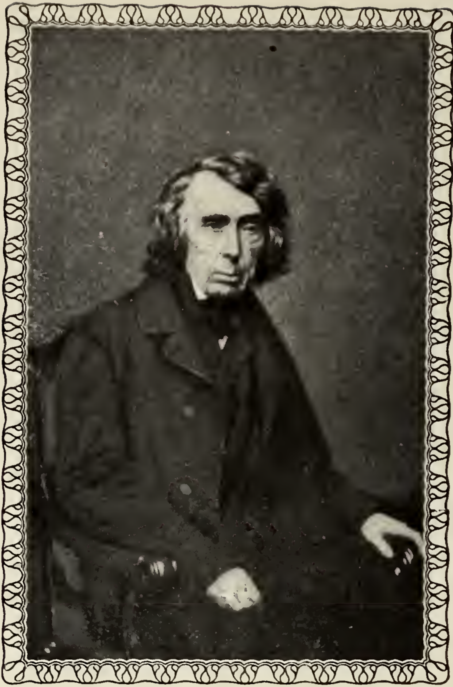
THE SECOND INAUGURATION OF LINCOLN

A FRAGMENT (ENLARGED) OF A PHOTOGRAPH REPRODUCED HERE THROUGH



AT WASHINGTON, MARCH 4, 1865

THE COURTESY OF THE OWNER, MR. CHARLES W. MC LELLAN



From a photograph in the collection of Robert Coster

CHIEF JUSTICE TANEY

"the author of the famous Dred Scott decision," who administered the oath of office to President Lincoln

MAJ.-GEN. BENJAMIN BUTLER

"General Butler thoroughly enjoyed his position of power, which, of course, was new to him, and . . . he keenly appreciated its theatrical possibilities"

difficulties standing in the way of an agreement upon a policy of that kind seemed well-nigh unsurmountable, the agitation in favor of it had a demoralizing effect upon public sentiment in general, and upon the Republican party in particular, especially when Seward, who had been regarded as the most radical leader of that party, appeared in the front rank of the compromisers. I was one of the many anti-slavery men who were greatly puzzled by Mr. Seward's mysterious attitude, and much alarmed as to what might come of it.

What we feared was not merely that the principles of our anti-slavery party might be surrendered, and the fruits of our anti-slavery victory frittered away, but that under the influence of a momentary panic a step might be taken that would—to use a term current at that time—"mexicanize" our Government; that is, destroy in it that element of stability which consists in the absolute assurance that when the officers of the Government are legally elected, their election will be unconditionally accepted and submitted to by the minority. When that rule is broken, when the possibility is admitted that after an election the minority may prescribe conditions upon the fulfilment of which its acceptance of the results of the election is to depend, the stability of republican government is gone. So long as such a possibility exists, the republic will be in a state of intermittent revolution. And this rule would have been broken. We should, in order to avoid by a post-election bargain one civil conflict, have opened the way forever to many other civil conflicts. We should, in one word, have destroyed the most indispensable guarantee of stability and good order in the Republic, had we, after the legal election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, purchased the submission of the slave-holding states to the result of that election by any compromise whatever. It was, therefore, not merely this or that concession to the slaveholding interests that was to be opposed, but it was the compromise as such, however little it might have conceded.

The profound anxiety I felt on this subject found voice in a series of letters I wrote

during that winter to my intimate friend in the House of Representatives, Mr. Potter of Wisconsin, who was of the same mind. The same anxiety led me, during an interval in my lecturing engagements, to make a flying trip to Washington, where I hoped to help my friend in "stiffening the backs" of some Republican members who had taken the compromise epidemic. But the panic had already much subsided, at least in Congress.

"Old Tom Corwin"

Mr. Potter managed to smuggle me on the floor of the House of Representatives, and there I witnessed one day a singular spectacle. The Hon. Thomas Corwin, "old Tom Corwin of Ohio," as he was popularly called, rose to address the House. He was the chairman of the then famous "Committee of Thirty-three," which was charged with the task of devising a compromise measure to compose the differences between the North and the South. He had a distinguished career behind him. He had been a Whig with anti-slavery leanings, had opposed the Mexican War in a speech celebrated for its boldness, had been a leading member of the Whig Party, Governor of Ohio, Senator, Secretary of the Treasury under President Fillmore; and had joined the Republican party in its struggles for free territories and zealously advocated the election of Mr. Lincoln. He was best known as a popular orator of great wit, genial humor, and fascinating eloquence. Interesting stories were told about him, of how he could produce wonderful effects by rapid changes of his facial expression. He had been one of the great "features" of the Harrison campaign in 1840, "the log-cabin and hard-cider campaign," when people would travel far "to hear Tom Corwin."

LIEUT.-GEN. WINFIELD SCOTT

From a photograph made in 1861

Now he was an old man, highly esteemed and much liked by all, and when, on the occasion mentioned, he rose in the House, members without distinction of party crowded eagerly around him, standing up in the aisles and between the seats, so as to catch every sound of his voice, which was much enfeebled by age. I managed to get upon one of the steps leading up to the Speaker's chair and, by looking over the heads of those in front of me, could see Mr. Corwin while he spoke. But from that distance, in spite of the breathless stillness reigning in the hall, I lost many of his sentences, because he spoke in a low murmur. There he stood, not the Tom Corwin of the stump who made his hearers roar with laughter or shout with enthusiasm, but an anxious old patriot, the faithful disciple of the old Whig school of compromisers. His swarthy face was unillumined by a single spark of his accustomed humor, and its expression was grave and solicitous. His gushing eloquence with nervous intensity, almost with the accents of despair, implored his hearers to accept what he thought necessary for the salvation of his country; and around him, all listening to the old man as if spellbound, with a sort of tender veneration, were many of the Southerners, ready to go home and join the insurrection. It was a memorable scene, — the last pathetic gasp of the policy of compromises.

When Mr. Corwin sat down, many of the members pressed around him to shake his hand, after what was probably the last speech

From a photograph in the collection of F. H. Meserve

BROADWAY, NEW YORK CITY, IN WAR TIME

With the army barracks and recruiting station on the right, in City Hall Park

of his life. I, too, approached him, and he seemed glad to see me. He kindly remembered that we had met on the platform of a mass-meeting at Alleghany City, and he expressed a wish that I would visit him at his quarters that evening. I found him alone there, and we had a quiet talk. In the course of it, I frankly expressed my opinion that it would be fatal to stable and orderly government in a republic to permit the legal result of an election to become a matter of bargain and compromise between the majority and the minority, and to purchase the submission of the minority to that result by concessions.

"Yes, yes!" said Mr. Corwin. "I know you young men think that way; and for aught I know, a majority of the Republicans think that way. But you must keep your Republic first. Now you will have to fight for it. But it is useless to argue further. I think, myself, that all the efforts for compromise will come to nothing. I have done the best I could, but on both sides they are like bull-dogs eager for the fray. We can only pray that God may protect the right."

When I rose to leave, he said: "I want to say something personal to you. At Alleghany City I heard you speak, and I noticed that you can crack a joke and make people laugh if you try. I want to say to you, young man, if you have any such faculty, don't cultivate it. I know how great the temptation is, and I have yielded to it. One of the most dangerous things to a public man is to become known as a jester. People will go to hear such a man, and then they will be disappointed if he talks to them seriously. They will hardly listen to the best things he offers them. They will want to hear the buffoon, and are dissatisfied if the buffoon talks sober sense. That has been my lot. Look at my career! I am an old man now. There has always been a great deal more in Tom Corwin than he got credit for. But he did not get credit because it was always expected that Tom Corwin would make people laugh. I do not know but they expected jokes from me

in the House to-day. That has been my curse. I have long felt it, but too late to get rid of the old reputation and to build up a new one. Take my example as a warning. Good-by, and God bless you."

I was deeply touched by the words of the old statesman, and made an earnest effort to convince him that the House had listened to his speech with the intensest interest and profound reverence, but he answered with a melancholy laugh and again bade me to mind his advice. . . .

During the campaign, I may candidly say, it had never occurred to me that my efforts as a public speaker should or might be rewarded by appointment to a federal office. But immediately after the election, it seemed to be generally taken for granted that the new Administration would, as a matter of course, give me some prominent place. I received several addresses signed by a large number of German-Americans from different parts of the country, congratulating me upon the services I had rendered and expressing the hope that the Administration would show a proper appreciation of them. Prominent Republicans of American nativity, especially members of Congress in whose districts I had spoken, wrote to me in the same vein. I have to confess that this pleased me greatly, and soon I easily permitted my friends to persuade me, or, perhaps, I easily persuaded myself, that it was entirely proper for me to expect an office of importance and dignity. But when it was suggested by several members of Congress that I should frankly tell Mr. Lincoln what I might wish to have, I positively refused. As I wrote to Mr. Potter — in one of the letters whose publication surprised me forty years later — I would not ask for anything, lest I compromise my political independence, which at no price was I willing to give up. If the President, of his own free will, offered me a position, I might take it without burdening myself with any personal obligation. Thus I "left the matter in the hands of my friends," and these friends, especially the leading Republicans of Wisconsin, were very earnest in requesting the Administration to offer me a first-class foreign mission.

Lincoln's First Inauguration

It was thought important, in view of the troublous state of things, that as large a number of Republicans as possible be present in Washington at the time of Mr. Lincoln's inauguration, and I found a great many friends, old and new, when I arrived there on March 1st. The air was still thick with rumors of "rebel plots" to assassinate Mr. Lincoln, or to capture him and carry him off before he could take hold of the reins of government. He had stolen a march upon whatever conspiracy there may have been, by entering the National Capitol, unexpected and unobserved, on the morning of February 23d, and was, no doubt, well guarded. But the multitude of Republicans assembled in the city were not satisfied that the danger was over, and saw treasonable designs in every scowling face — and of these, indeed, there were a good many.

But the inauguration passed off without disturbance. I was favored with a place in front of the great portico of the Capitol, from which I could distinctly see and hear every part of the official function. I saw Lincoln step forward to the desk upon which the Bible lay — his rugged face, appearing above all those surrounding him, calm and sad, but so unlike any other in that distinguished assemblage that one might well have doubted how he and the others could work together. I saw Senator Douglas, his defeated antagonist, the "little giant" of the past, who only two years before had haughtily treated Lincoln like a tall dwarf, standing close by him. I witnessed the remarkable scene when Lincoln, about to deliver his inaugural address, could not at once find a convenient place for his hat, and Douglas took it and held it like an attendant while Lincoln was speaking. I saw the withered form of Chief Justice Taney, the author of the famous Dred Scott decision, that judicial compend of the doctrine of slavery, administer the oath of office to the first president elected on a distinct anti-slavery platform. I saw, standing by, the outgoing president, James Buchanan, with his head slightly inclined on one side, and his winking eye, and his white neck-cloth, — the man who had done more than any other to degrade and demoralize the National Government and to encourage the rebellion, now destined to retire to an unhonored obscurity and to the dreary task of trying to make the world believe that he was a better patriot and statesman than he appeared to be. I heard every word, pronounced by Abraham Lincoln's kindly voice, of that inaugural address which was to be a message of peace and good-will, but the reception of which in the

South as a proclamation of war showed clearly that no offer of compromise, indeed, that nothing short of complete acceptance of their scheme of an independent slave-holding empire, would have satisfied the Southern leaders.

The Spanish Mission Offered to Schurz — Objections from Seward

During this time I saw President Lincoln repeatedly, and he always received me with great cordiality. We spoke together as freely as we had done before he was president. Our conversations turned upon questions of policy and of the qualifications and claims of applicants for office whom I had recommended. My own case was never mentioned between us until he, with evident satisfaction, announced to me that I had been nominated for the position of Minister of the United States to Spain. The Senate confirmed my nomination without unusual delay. I was curious to know whether Senator Douglas, whom I had so bitterly attacked during the campaign, had offered any objection, but I was informed that he had not. But there had been, as I learned later from Mr. Potter, some objection to my nomination on the part of Mr. Seward, the Secretary of State. He argued that as I had been engaged in revolutionary movements in Europe, at a comparatively recent period, my appearance in a diplomatic capacity at a European court might not be favorably received, and that this was of importance at a critical time, when we had especial reason for conciliating foreign governments. Mr. Lincoln, my informant told me, replied that I could be trusted to conduct myself discreetly; that at any rate, he did so trust me; that it was not for the government of this Republic to discriminate against men for having made efforts in behalf of liberty elsewhere, —efforts with which every good American at heart sympathized; and that it might be well for European governments to realize this fact. He was strongly supported in this view by Mr. Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury, and Mr. Montgomery Blair, the Postmaster-General.

Seward's Bitter Outburst

When Mr. Lincoln took so peremptory a stand, Mr. Seward at last yielded, but not with good grace. Indeed, the matter gave him occasion for a singular display of temper. One day Mr. Potter, accompanied by another Republican member of Congress, from Wisconsin, discussed the subject with Mr. Seward in his office at the State Department and incidentally remarked that the failure to bestow such a distinction upon me would be a severe disappointment to a good many people. At this, Mr. Seward jumped up from his chair, paced the floor excitedly, and exclaimed:

"Disappointment! You speak to me of disappointment? To me who was justly entitled to the Republican nomination for the presidency, and who had to stand aside and see it given to a little Illinois lawyer! You speak to me of disappointment?"

These stories came to me after the matter had been finally settled, and too late to have any effect upon my conduct. I believed and still believe them to be substantially true, as Mr. Potter told them to me, including the story of Mr. Seward's outbreak. Mr. Seward permitted his feeling that the Republican party had grossly wronged him to run away with his temper on various other well-authenticated occasions. Moreover, at that time he had, like many others, not yet arrived at a just appreciation of Mr. Lincoln's character and abilities, and looked down upon him as a person much below his level. But as to the reasons Mr. Seward urged against my being sent as American minister to a European court at that time, he was clearly right. I think I should have judged as he did, had I been Secretary of State.

His apprehensions, however, were not justified by the event. Soon after the confirmation of my appointment by the Senate, I received a visit from Señor Tassara, the Spanish minister in Washington, who had been a journalist and was, I believe, at one time somewhat of a revolutionary character himself. He gave me every reason to think that my appointment was quite acceptable to the Spanish Government. And in the course of time my personal relations with that government became, in fact, very agreeable. But it might have been otherwise, and Mr. Seward was perfectly correct in not wishing to take any superfluous risk in that respect. Whenever in later years I have reflected upon that part of my career, I have inwardly reproached myself for not having anticipated at that time Mr. Seward's view of the matter, although it was kept secret from me while the question was still

pending. I certainly ought to have done so, but I have to confess that my pride — or I might perhaps more properly call it my vanity — was immensely flattered by the thought of returning to Europe clothed in all the dignity of a minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary of the United States only a few years after having left my native land as a political refugee. But when I heard of the discussions that had preceded my appointment, I did not enjoy that triumph as I had thought I should. Even while receiving public and private congratulations in unexpected abundance, I was secretly troubled by a lurking doubt as to whether the office I had obtained was really one that I should hold, and whether the fact that my friends had sought it for me with my knowledge and approval was not really equivalent to having asked for it myself. In this state of mind I left Washington for my home in Wisconsin.

The Attack on Fort Sumter

I had not been there many days when the portentous news of the rebel attack on Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, startled the country. The President's proclamation calling for seventy-five thousand volunteers followed immediately, and less than a week later came the bloody assault of a Secessionist mob upon the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment passing through Baltimore. It is impossible to describe the electric effect these occurrences produced upon the popular mind in the Northern states. Until the first gun was fired upon Fort Sumter, many patriotic people still entertained a lingering hope of saving the Union without a conflict of arms. Now civil war had suddenly become a certainty. The question of what might have been utterly vanished before the question of what was to be. A mighty shout arose that the Republic must be saved at any cost. It was one of those sublime moments of patriotic exaltation when everybody seems willing to do everything and to sacrifice everything for a common cause; one of the ideal sunbursts in the history of a nation.

The newspapers reported that the City of Washington had been cut off from its railroad communications through Baltimore and was almost entirely defenseless; that a rebel force might invade it at any moment and do no end of mischief without meeting serious opposition; that the department buildings were being barricaded and the government clerks armed with muskets; and that the Government needed the help of every man who could get there. I thought it my duty to hurry to Washington at once and to offer what services I could render. I put the pistols I had carried in the Kinkel affair into my hand-bag and started off. I shall never forget the contrast between this and the preceding journey, when only a short time before I had traveled from Washington westward. A dreadful load of gloomy expectancy seemed, on the previous occasion, to oppress the whole country. Passengers in the railway cars talked together in murmurs, as if afraid of the sound of their own voices. At the railroad stations stood men with anxious faces, waiting for the newspapers which, when they arrived, they hastily opened to read the headings, and then handed to one another with sighs of disappointment. Multitudes of people seemed to be perplexed, not only as to what they might expect, but also as to what they wished. And now what a change! Every railroad station filled with an excited crowd hurrahing for the Union and Lincoln; the Stars and Stripes fluttering from numberless staffs; the drum and fife resounding everywhere; the cars thronged with young men hurrying to the nearest enlistment place, anxious only lest there be no room left for them in the regiments hastily forming, or lest those regiments be too late to secure Washington from a rebel *coup-de-main*. To judge from the scenes I witnessed on the railroads, old party differences had been forgotten. Men who had shaken their fists at one another during the political campaign now shook hands in token of a common patriotism. Social distinctions, too, seemed to have vanished. Millionaires' sons rushed to the colors by the side of laborers. The railroad journey was as through a continued series of recruiting camps full of noise and bustle day and night.

"Ben" Butler as a Soldier

When we arrived at Perryville on the Susquehanna (between Wilmington, Delaware, and Baltimore), we found railroad communication on that line between Washington and the North still interrupted. The Maryland Secessionists were reported to be in control of Baltimore. The railroad passengers for Washington had to board a steamboat at Perryville, which took them to

Annapolis, where a small force of federal troops was assembled under the command of Maj.-Gen. Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts. Introducing myself to the guard as an officer of the Government on my way to Washington, I was at once admitted to the presence of the General at his headquarters. I found him clothed in a gorgeous militia uniform adorned with rich gold embroidery. His rotund form, his squinting eye, and the peculiar puff of his cheeks made him look a little grotesque. Only a person much more devoid of a sense of humor than I could have failed to notice that General Butler thoroughly enjoyed his position of power, which, of course, was new to him, and that he keenly appreciated its theatrical possibilities. He received me with great courtesy and assured me at once that he would see me safely to my destination. He said that he was just engaged in reopening the railroad line from Annapolis to Annapolis Junction on the road connecting Baltimore with Washington, and that the first train would be started before nightfall; that I would be welcome to travel on that train; and that, until the time of my departure, all the conveniences of his headquarters would be at my disposal. While we were conversing, officers entered from time to time to make reports or to ask for orders. Nothing could have been more striking than the air of high authority with which the General received them, and the tone of curt peremptoriness peculiar to the military commander of the stage, with which he expressed his satisfaction or discontent and gave his instructions. And after every such scene he looked around with a sort of triumphant gaze, as if to assure himself that the bystanders were duly impressed. But he did expedite business, and no doubt he got over his theatrical fancies as the novelty of the situation wore off.

Before dark the train was ready to start. One of General Butler's staff-officers told me a little story which will bear repeating, as it illustrates the character of our volunteer regiments. When our troops took possession of Annapolis, there was but one locomotive in the railroad shop, and that locomotive had been partly taken to pieces by the "rebel sympathizers" of the place, in order to make it unfit for use. A volunteer regiment was drawn up in line, and men who thought themselves able to repair a locomotive were called for. A dozen or more privates stepped forward, and one of them exclaimed: "Why, that locomotive was built in my shop!" In a short time the locomotive was again in working order.

The General had sent a detachment of infantry ahead of the train to guard the track and to scour the woods between Annapolis and Annapolis Junction. We proceeded only at a snail's pace, and it was past midnight when we reached the Junction. There we found Col. Ambrose Burnside with his Rhode Island regiment encamped in a grove of tall trees. The camp-fires were still burning brightly, the soldiers, wrapped in red blankets, lying around them in picturesque groups. Colonel Burnside, the very image of soldierly beauty, was still up and doing, and received us with his peculiar heartiness. Young Governor Sprague of Rhode Island, also in military attire, with a waving yellow plume on his black felt hat, was also on the ground. He would not remain behind when his people went to the front. This Rhode Island regiment was noted as one that had a remarkable number of millionaires in its ranks.

Soon after sunrise we had a train for Washington under way, filled with soldiers and a few civilian passengers. I walked into the city while the soldiers were getting into line at the station. The streets, which a few weeks ago I had seen filled with a lively multitude, now looked deserted and gloomy. Of the few persons I met on the sidewalk, some stared at me with a scowl on their brows, as if asking me: "What do you want here?" I was afterwards told that when the first troops, that had meanwhile arrived, marched into town, they were received by the inhabitants with jeers and curses and insulting epithets from doors and windows, the resident population of Washington largely sympathizing with the Secessionists.

Lincoln's Fear for Washington

As soon as possible I reported myself to Mr. Lincoln at the White House. He seemed surprised but glad to see me. I told him why I had come, and he approved. In his quaint way he described to me the anxieties he had passed through since the rebel attack on Fort Sumter and before the first Northern troops reached Washington. He told me of an incident characteristic of the situation, which I wish I could repeat in his own language. I can give only the substance. One afternoon, after he had issued his call for

troops, he sat alone in his room, and a feeling came over him as if he were utterly deserted and helpless. He thought any moderately strong body of Secessionist troops, if there were any in the neighborhood, might come over the "long bridge" across the Potomac, and just take him and the members of the Cabinet — the whole lot of them. Then he suddenly heard a sound like the boom of a cannon. "There they are!" he said to himself. He expected every moment that somebody would rush in with the report of an attack. But the White House attendants, whom he interrogated, had heard nothing. Nobody came, and all remained still. Then he thought he would look after the thing himself. So he walked out, and walked and walked until he got to the Arsenal. There he found the doors all open, and not a soul to guard them. Anybody might have gone in and helped himself to the arms. There was perfect solitude and stillness all around. Then he walked back to the White House without noticing the slightest sign of disturbance. He met a few persons on the way, some of whom he asked whether they had not heard something like the boom of a cannon. Nobody had heard anything, and so he supposed it must have been a freak of his imagination. It is probable that at least a guard was sent to the Arsenal that evening. The confusion of those days must have been somewhat like that prevailing at the time of the capture of Washington in the War of 1812.

In the course of our conversation I opened my heart to Mr. Lincoln about my troubles of conscience. I told him that since recent events had made certain a warlike conflict with the seceding states, it was much against my feelings to go to Spain as minister and to spend my days in the ease and luxury of a diplomatic position, while the young men of the North were exposing their lives in the field, in defense of the life of the Republic; that having helped, as a public speaker, to bring about the present condition of things, I thought I would rather bear my share of the consequences; that I had seen some little field service in the revolutionary conflicts of my native country, and had ever since made military matters a favorite subject of study; and that I should be glad to resign my mission to Spain and at once join the volunteer army.

Mr. Lincoln listened to me with attention and evident sympathy. Then, after a moment of silence, he said that he fully understood and appreciated my feelings, but that he would not advise me to give up the Spanish mission. He thought that this diplomatic position might eventually offer me a greater field of usefulness. The war might be over very soon. Many people whose opinions were entitled to respect thought so. Mr. Seward was speaking of sixty or ninety days. He himself was not at all as sanguine as that, but he might be wrong. However, in a few weeks, we should, as to that point, see more clearly. He did not know whether it was necessary that I should start for Spain immediately. I might see Seward about that. He could probably arrange everything so as to enable me to delay my departure for at least a month or two. Accordingly, I called upon Mr. Seward and told him of my conversation with the President. Mr. Seward was very complaisant. He thought that Mr. Horatio Perry, a very able and patriotic gentleman who had formerly been connected with our mission to Spain, and who, with my hearty concurrence, had recently been appointed secretary of legation and was already on the ground, might temporarily act as chargé d'affaires until my arrival at Madrid, and that, therefore, I need not hurry.

Schurz's Plan for a Cavalry Force

I then laid before Mr. Lincoln a plan I had formed, as follows: In the impending war an efficient cavalry force would undoubtedly be needed. The formation and drilling of cavalry troops composed of raw material would require much time. But I was confident that there were in the City of New York and its vicinity many hundreds of able-bodied immigrants from Germany, who had served in German cavalry regiments and who had only to be armed and put upon horses to make cavalrymen immediately fit for active service. There were also, to command them, a sufficient number of experienced cavalry officers trained in the Prussian or some other German army. I thought that I, being somewhat known among the German-born citizens of the country, was a suitable person to organize such a regiment if the Government gave me proper authority. Mr. Lincoln was very much pleased with my project and sent me at once to Mr. Cameron, the Secretary of War, to discuss with him the necessary arrangements. Mr. Cameron was also very

much pleased, but thought it necessary that I should submit the matter to General Scott, the commanding general of the army, before final action was taken.

I had never seen General Scott, but had heard him described as a somewhat pompous old gentleman, not inclined to tolerate opinions on military matters in any way differing from his own. Looking forward to an interview with him on such a subject with some misgiving, I asked Mr. Cameron for a letter of introduction setting forth as strongly as possible my claim to kind attention, so that the General might not at once put me down as a mere intruder seeking a favor for himself. Thus armed, I approached the General, who, after having read my letter, invited me to take a chair. But when I explained my scheme to him, his face assumed a look of stern and somewhat impatient authority. His question whether I had any practical experience in the organizing and drilling of mounted troops was of ill-omen. When I had confessed that I had no such experience, he replied that he had concluded so from my proposition. If we were to have any war at all, he added, it would be a short one. It would be over long before any volunteer cavalry troops could be made fit for active service in the field. Moreover, the theater of that war would be Virginia, and the surface of Virginia was so cut up with fences and other obstructions as to make operations with large bodies of cavalry impracticable. The regular dragoons he had were quite sufficient for all needs.

I saw, of course, the utter uselessness of any attempt I might make to argue the matter further with such an authority. When I reported my conversation with General Scott to Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Cameron, they both agreed that the old gentleman was taking too narrow a view of present exigencies. I promptly received the desired authority for raising the regiment and departed for the City of New York. . . .

Ordered to Spain

There I found that many of the German cavalrymen I had counted upon had already enlisted in the infantry regiments then forming. But there were enough of them left to enable me to organize several companies in a very short time, and I should certainly have completed my regiment in season for the summer campaign, had I not been cut short in my work by another call from the Government. I received a letter from the Secretary of State informing me that circumstances had rendered my departure for my place at Madrid eminently desirable, and that he wished me to report myself to him at Washington as soon as possible. This was a hard blow. But hard as it was, I had to obey. I took it as a just punishment for ever having yielded to the vain thought of appearing in Europe as an American minister plenipotentiary. I promptly secured the transfer of my recruiting authority to Colonel McReynolds of Michigan and left New York for Washington. My regiment was fully organized by my successor before the lapse of many weeks and won an excellent reputation in the field as the First New York volunteer cavalry regiment, commonly called the "Lincoln Cavalry." The fences and other obstructions on the surface of Virginia did not prevent it from rendering good service.

Having reported myself to Mr. Seward, I was informed by him that, while Mr. Perry, the secretary of legation at Madrid, had, as chargé d'affaires, done the business of the office quite satisfactorily, and he could not too strongly recommend him to my confidence, the presence of a minister of full rank was now needed near the Spanish Court. . . .

Sumner's Misgivings Regarding Lincoln

The question was frequently asked at this time, in that atmosphere of discontentment, whether Abraham Lincoln was really the man to cope with a situation bristling with problems so perplexing. This question nobody then seemed ready to answer. Those who visited the White House — and the White House appeared to be open to whomsoever wished to enter — saw there a man of unconventional manners, who, without the slightest effort to put on dignity, treated all men alike, much like old neighbors; whose speech had not seldom a rustic flavor about it, who always seemed to have time for a homely talk and never to be in a hurry to press business, and who occasionally spoke about important affairs of State with the same nonchalance — I might almost say, irreverence — with which he might have discussed an every-day law case in his office at Springfield, Illinois. People were puzzled. Some interesting stories circulated about Lincoln's wit, his quaint sayings, and also

about his kindness of heart and the sympathetic loveliness of his character; but as to his qualities as a statesman, serious people, who did not intimately know him, were inclined to reserve their judgment.

I had the good fortune of coming nearer to Charles Sumner in these days. Since the members from the seceding states had left the United States Senate, the Republicans commanded a majority in that body, and Sumner was by common consent made chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, a position for which he was unquestionably by far the fittest man among his colleagues. He knew Europe and followed with intelligent understanding the political developments of the Old World. He showed a kind interest in my own experiences and observations, and we had frequent conversations about kindred subjects. He found that he could speak to me on such things with a feeling that, having had some European experience myself, I would more easily understand him than most of those with whom he had intercourse; and thus a certain confidentiality grew up between us, which, in the course of time, was to ripen into genuine friendship.

Sumner had never seen Lincoln before he arrived in Washington. The conditions under which Lincoln had risen into prominence in the West were foreign to Sumner's experience — perhaps even to his imagination. When he met Lincoln for the first time, he was greatly amazed and puzzled by what he saw and heard. He confessed as much as this to me. Lincoln was utterly unlike Sumner's ideal of a statesman. The refined New Englander, who, after having enjoyed a thorough classical education, had seen much of the great world at home and abroad and conceived an exalted idea of the dignity of an American senator and of a president of the great American Republic, could hardly understand this Western product of American democracy in the original shape. In the conversations he had with the President, he indeed noticed now and then flashes of thought and bursts of illuminating expression which struck him as extraordinary, although, being absolutely without any sense of humor, he often lost Lincoln's keenest points. But on the whole he could not get rid of his misgivings as to how this seemingly untutored child of nature would master the tremendous task before him. He had, indeed, by Mr. Lincoln's occasional utterances, been confirmed in his belief that the President was a deeply convinced and faithful anti-slavery man; and since the destruction of slavery was uppermost in Sumner's mind, as the greatest object to be accomplished, he found comfort in that assurance.

But he was much troubled by what he called the slow working of Mr. Lincoln's mind and his deplorable hesitancy in attacking the vital question. He profoundly distrusted Seward on account of his compromising attitude at the critical period between the election and Mr. Lincoln's inauguration, and also because of the mysterious, delphic utterances Mr. Seward now occasionally gave forth. But he had great faith in Chase, whose anti-slavery principles he regarded as above all temptation, and whose influence with the President, he hoped, would neutralize Seward's.

But Chase, as I concluded from conversations I had with him, was not in a state of mind that would make easy the establishment of confidential relations between him and Lincoln. He did not give his disappointment as a defeated aspirant to the presidency so vehement an expression as Seward did, but he felt it no less keenly. Neither did he venture upon so drastic a demonstration of his underestimate of Lincoln's character and ability as Seward had done. But I doubt whether his opinion of the President was much higher than Seward's had been, before Lincoln's gentle but decisive victory over him. I concluded this, not from what Chase said, but rather from what he did not say when the conversation turned upon the President. This feeling only intensified Chase's natural reserve of manner, and, as became evident in the course of time, the relations between Chase and Lincoln always remained such as will exist between two men who, in their official intercourse, do not personally come near to each other and are not warmed into confidential heartiness.

Lincoln's Anxiety over Foreign Relations

When I called upon Mr. Lincoln to take leave, he received me with the old cordiality and expressed his sincere regret that, after all, I had to go away before this cruel war was over; but, as Seward wanted it, I must go, of course, and he hoped it would all be for the best. We had some conversation about the state of affairs which had developed since I had seen him last. He expressed the

intensest gratification at the enthusiastic popular response to his call for volunteers, and at the patriotic attitude taken by so many leading Democrats. He warmly praised the patriotic action of the Germans of St. Louis in the taking of Camp Jackson. The criticism to which the Administration was being subjected affected him keenly, but did not irritate him against those who made it. He always allowed that those who differed from us might be as honest as we were. He thought if the Administration had so far "stumbled along," as was said, it had, on the whole, "stumbled along in the right direction." But he expressed great anxiety as to the attitude of foreign countries, especially England and France, with regard to our troubles, and this anxiety was much increased by the British Queen's proclamation of neutrality, the news of which had recently arrived. He gave me to understand that he deplored having given so little attention to foreign affairs and being so dependent upon other people's judgment, and that he felt the necessity of "studying up" on the subject as much as his opportunities permitted him. I did not know then that only a short time before he had found himself obliged very seriously to modify one of Mr. Seward's despatches to Mr. Charles Francis Adams, our minister in England, in order to avoid complications that might have become very grave. Mr. Lincoln did not drop any hint of this to me but he said that he wanted me when in Europe to watch public sentiment there as closely as possible, and he added: "Remember now, when you are abroad, that whenever anything occurs to you that you want to tell me personally, or that you think I ought to know, you are to write me directly." I did not anticipate then how soon I should have to do this.

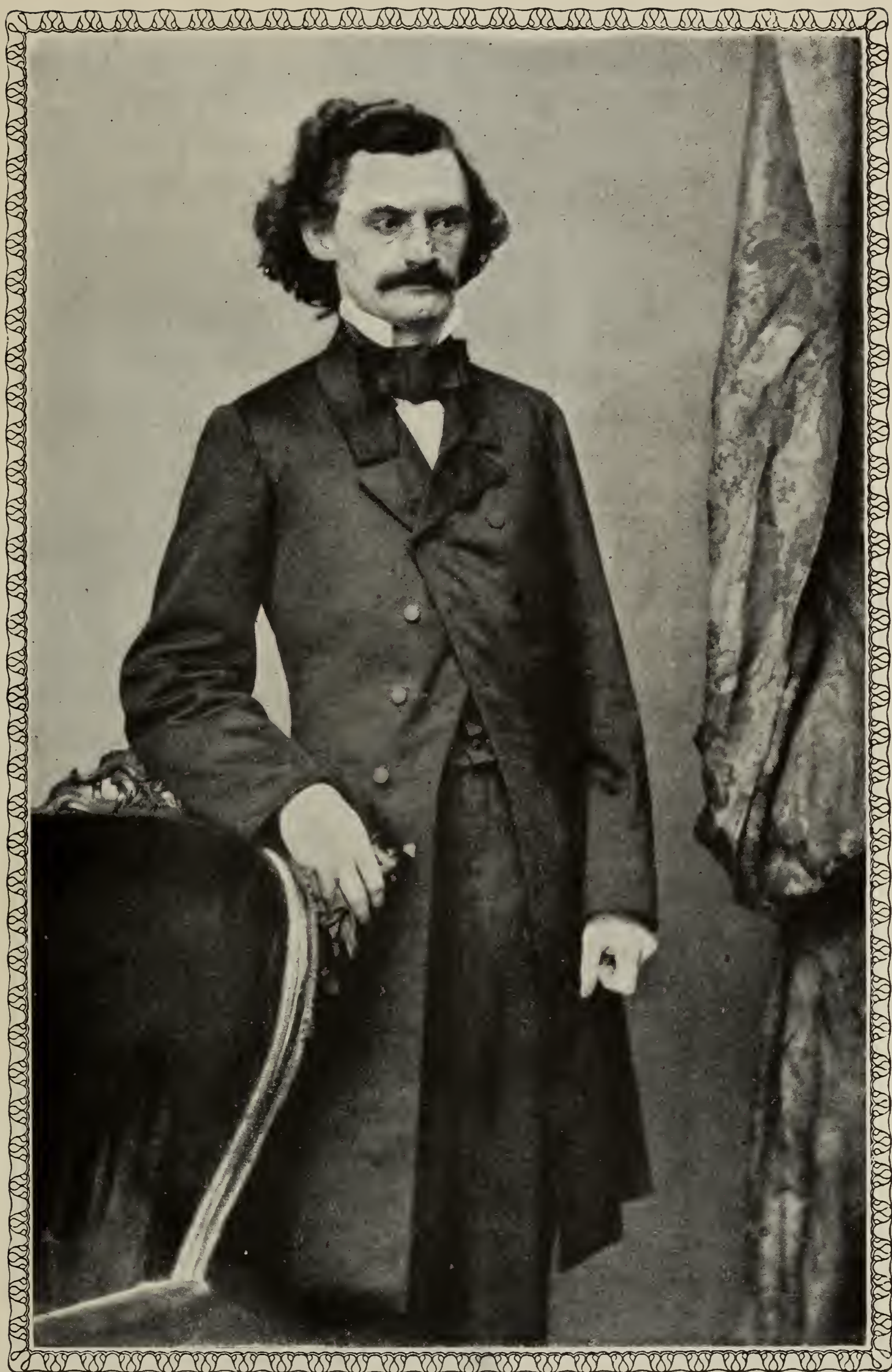
A Luncheon with Lincoln

Before parting I told Mr. Lincoln that I had a German brother-in-law with me in Washington, Mr. Henry Meyer, a young merchant from Hamburg and an ardent friend of this country, who would be proud to pay his respects to the President. Might I bring him for a moment?

"Certainly," said Mr. Lincoln, "bring him to-morrow about lunch time and lunch with me. I guess Mary (Mrs. Lincoln) will have something for us to eat." Accordingly, the next day I brought my brother-in-law, who was greatly astonished at this unexpected invitation to lunch with the President and much troubled about the etiquette to be observed. I found it difficult to quiet him with the assurance that in this case there was no etiquette at all. But he was still more astonished when Mr. Lincoln, instead of waiting for a ceremonious bow, shook him by the hand like an old acquaintance and said in his hearty way that he was glad to see the brother-in-law of "this young man here," and that he hoped the Americans treated him well. Mrs. Lincoln, — "Mary," as the President again called her — was absent, being otherwise engaged, and there were no other guests. So we had Mr. Lincoln at the table all to ourselves. He seemed to be in excellent spirits, asked many questions about Hamburg, which my brother-in-law, who spoke English fluently, answered in an entertaining manner, and Mr. Lincoln found several occasions for inserting funny stories, at which not only we, but he himself, too, laughed most heartily. As we left the White House, my companion could hardly find words to express his puzzled admiration of the man who, having risen from the bottom of the social ladder to one of the most exalted stations in the world, had remained so perfectly natural and so absolutely unconscious of how he appeared to others, — a man to whom it did not for a single moment occur that a person in his position might put on a certain dignity, to be always maintained, but who gave himself out with such genial sincerity and kindliness that one could not wish him other than he was.

A few days later I was afloat on my way to Spain.

MR. SCHURZ'S REMINISCENCES IN THE APRIL NUMBER WILL TREAT OF HIS EXPERIENCES IN THE COURT OF SPAIN, AND THE CRISIS IN OUR FOREIGN RELATIONS EARLY IN THE CIVIL WAR



From a negative by Brady now in the possession of F. H. Meserve.

CARL SCHURZ IN 1861

At this time President Lincoln appointed Mr. Schurz to be United States Minister to Spain